Student and Exchange Visitor Program Office (SEVP)
SEVIS Release 5.1 Training - Questions & Answers

1) Why is the Principal Designated School Official (PDSO) the only one who could perform some corrections? If the PDSO is away then no one else can do the corrections.

Answer: *As this is the initial phase of the data correction opportunity, the Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) will closely monitor the corrections performed by school officials. Therefore, we have only extended this functionality to the school's highest level of authority (i.e. PDSO). It is important that your PDSO is knowledgeable of the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) and plays an active role in maintaining student records. In the event that the PDSO will be out for an extended period of time, we advise they reassign the role to an experienced Designated School Official (DSO) in their absence. In addition, the SEVP School Certification Branch Chief recommends schools to consider making a PDSO someone who doesn't travel and is working with those students all the time. There are some schools that believe that their highest-ranking official needs to be the PDSO on the petition, but that's not the way we're viewing it. We're viewing the PDSO as a working member of the team, therefore a school may want to designate someone other than the superintendent or registrar as a PDSO, such as an international student advisor or advisor. Please note that each campus on the I-17 can have a different PDSO with up to 9 DSOs per campus.*

2) What would be an appropriate justification for making a correction?

Answer: *The justification should explain why the correction was needed. For example, "The student requested an extension of their program. However, the PDSO/DSO failed to timely submit the update in SEVIS."*

3) Will there be a change in the F-1 regulations to allow for these corrections?

Answer: *No. The regulations do not need to be changed to reflect the new functionality. However, DHS does consider this new functionality as part of the reporting requirements responsibilities and will closely monitor the corrections that are performed.*

4) With the allowance of PDSOs and DSOs to correct Student Status from "Completed" to "Terminated," what is the difference between these two terms? Is a student considered "Terminated" only if he/she leaves school before completing his/her program of study, and "Completed" only after finishing his/her program of study?

Answer: *Completed status is when the student has successfully completed his or her course of study and all other program related activities (i.e., Optional Practical Training [OPT]). Terminated status is when the student's participation in SEVIS has been terminated by DHS or a school official prior to completion of his or her course of study. A Terminated status in SEVIS implies that either the student has violated his or her F-1/M-1 status, has been authorized an early withdrawal, or has been approved for a change of status from F-1/M-1 to another visa class, i.e., H-1B. Please refer to the SEVIS User Manual for a complete list of termination reasons and definitions of record status.*

5) Is it necessary for the PDSO or DSO to input into SEVIS the status of "Completed" for a student who has completed his/her program of study, or is this understood by SEVIS automatically when the student's end date is reached, provided there is no termination indicated?

Answer: *If a student informs the PDSO/DSO that they will exit the U.S. prior to the end of the allotted grace period, 30 days for M-1 and 60-days for F-1, the PDSO/DSO can manually complete the student in SEVIS. However, if an F-1 student anticipates transferring or enrolling in a new program level, the PDSO/DSO should not manually complete the student in SEVIS. Please note if the record is not transferred or updated with a change of education level within 60 days of the program or OPT end date, whichever is later, SEVIS will auto-complete the record.*

6) PDSO/DSO will be provided with three new alerts: Students within 45 days of Termination: A list of students who will be terminated within the next 45 days. Could you explain this in details? Also, which termination reason(s)?

Answer: *The students within 45 days of Termination alert will display all records that will be automatically terminated by an automatic maintenance job. The alert will reflect the name of the student, the termination date, and the termination reason that will update the record. This alert gives the P/DSO the opportunity to review those student records listed to either update the record accordingly or allow the record to auto-terminate by the system.*

7) The regulations at 8 CFR 214.2(f)(7)(iii), which govern program extensions for students in lawful F status, clearly state that "A DSO may not grant an extension if the student did not apply for an extension until after the program end date noted on the Form I-20. An F-1 student who is unable to complete the educational program within the time listed on Form I-20 and who is ineligible for program extension pursuant to this paragraph (f)(7) is considered out of status." Therefore, what is an acceptable reason for a PDSO to extend a student's program after the current program end date, given that the regulations are very clear that a DSO cannot do this? What is the regulatory basis for the Extend Program correction action? Can you please provide some guidance as to how to use the SEVIS 5.1 Extend Program correction action in light of the regulations at 8 CFR 214.2(f)(7)?

Answer: *Prior to release 5.1, SEVIS would only allow a PDSO/DSO to extend a student's program prior to the program end date noted on their SEVIS Form I-20. However, there have been many cases in which the student has timely requested a program extension, but the PDSO/DSO failed to timely submit the update in SEVIS. This correction should only be performed if the student requested the extension, but the PDSO/DSO failed to timely submit the update in SEVIS prior to the program end date noted on their SEVIS Form I-20. Therefore, the extend program correction action still falls within regulations.*

8) When a student changes FROM F-1 upon completion of OPT, at what point do I complete the student record? Do I wait until Change has been approved or do I complete their record 60 days after the OPT end date?

Answer: *The PDSO/DSO does not need to manually complete the student's record. Please note, SEVIS will auto-complete the student's record if their OPT end date is prior to the benefit start date for their new visa class. Conversely, if the benefit start date is prior to the OPT end date, SEVIS will auto-terminate the student's record for "Change of Status Approved."*

9) It has been stated in your materials that the "PDSO will be able to perform a correction to the program end date for an F-1 student up to 15 days after the current program end date," and that the "school must maintain the supporting documentation for all corrections and, upon request, provide it to the Department of Homeland Security (DHS)." Please clarify what constitutes appropriate and adequate "supporting documentation" beyond those things entered in the "Remarks" section of the I-20.

Answer: *The PDSO should maintain information regarding the action taken to sufficiently justify the correction performed. This information should be documented on official letterhead, signed by the PDSO and include the following:*

Name of the student
SEVIS ID
Correction performed (e.g., extend program)
Reason for the correction

If the correction will be performed on multiple student records, the PDSO may write one letter and affix a spreadsheet that shows all students updated. However, a copy of the letter must be kept with each student's physical file for 1 year after the student has either completed his or her program or transferred from your institution. The only situation where you do not have to keep a record is for the transfer of a transfer-in record. Instead, perform the transfer once there is confirmation from the PDSO at the prior school and then clearly note in the student remarks field that the student's record was transferred to your school in error and that your school will be transferring the record to the correct school.

10) The new program end date cannot exceed one year beyond the current program end date. Can it be extended again at the end of another year?

Answer: *Yes.*

11) Should dependent I-20 records be changed whenever the primary I-20 is changed? For example, if I change the program end date on the primary I-20 should I also do so on the dependent I-20?

Answer: *No. If the F-2 dependent is in the same status as the F-1 principal, any updates made to the principal record will automatically reflect on the dependent record in SEVIS, including for example, the program end date of the principal. The only action that may need to be performed on the dependent record separate from the principal record is an update to the biographical information.*

12) Would you also be allowing PDSO/DSOs to post OPT requests 15 days after the current end date?

Answer: *No. SEVIS will still only allow a PDSO to request OPT prior to the program end date noted on the student's form I-20.*

13) In regard to the Transferring of Transfer-In Record, how will the Transfer record appear at the receiving institution for this correction? In an example where the record is transferred to the incorrect institution and this institution is allowed to transfer the record back while the record is in Initial status, how will the record appear for the original school? Will the record be in Initial status and the school be allowed to transfer out the record (this time to the correct institution) or will the record be placed back into its original state at the sending institution? If placed back in the original state, is there allowance when the correction takes place outside of the 60-day grace period? The concern is that if the correction takes place outside of the 60-day grace period and the record goes back to its original state, the system will auto-complete the record, requiring reinstatement.

Answer: *This correction should only be performed if the student's original school (school A) transferred the record to the wrong school (school B). In this situation, school B would update the record to Initial status and transfer the record to the correct school (school C). The record would then appear as Deactivated with school B and Draft with school C. Please note that you should not use this correction if school A transferred the student's record to your school (school B) in error and the student intends to remain at school A. In this case, a data fix should be requested to cancel the transfer.*

14) When do the changes outlined in the SEVIS user manual go into effect?

Answer: *The changes are already effective with release 5.1, which was deployed on December 6, 2005.*

15) What "Issue Reasons" options will be available to the PDSO for the "Return to Initial Status" correction option?

Answer: *Two issue reasons will be available: Initial Attendance and Initial Attendance-Change of Status Requested.*

16) Will the list of Termination Reasons under the "Terminate Student" correction action be the same as the list of Termination Reasons available under the regular "Terminate Student" action?

Answer: *Yes.*

17) According to the Release 5.1 Training Slides for F/M users, a PDSO will be able to transfer a Transfer-In record that is in Initial status using the Transfer Out option on the Corrections menu in order to correct a record that was transferred in error or a record that has passed the transfer release date. However, this still forces a school that received a Transfer-In record in error to use the "Create I-20" Edit action, which involves entering program and financial information for a student who will never attend the school, in order to change the status of the Transfer-In record from Draft to Initial. Rather than forcing schools to enter "dummy" SEVIS information in order to be able to correct a record that was transferred in error, could SEVIS be modified so that the "Transfer Out" correction action is available to use when a Transfer-In record is in Draft status as well?

Answer: *No, only school users can view Draft status records. Therefore, if SEVIS allowed schools to transfer a record while in Draft status, DHS will not be able to view the transfer-out record. However, to aid schools in creating the Initial record we advise PDSOs to enter the following information on the Initial record:*

Program Start Date: the date of the correction/today's date
Program End Date: tomorrow's date
Major: general studies
Financial Information: use all zeroes or ones

Then when performing the correction enter the following:

Transfer Release Date: the date of the correction/today's date
Remarks: "Student was erroneously transferred to our school when the record should have been transferred to (name of correct school)."
Reason for Correction: same as Remarks.

18) Can you clarify what actions can be performed on both F and M records?

Answer: *Status corrections apply to both F and M records, however the extend program option and the transfer of a transfer-in record only pertain to F. Both the extend program option and the transfer of a transfer in record will not become available for M records because they are an adjudicated event. The regulations only allow you a 45 day window to request extensions for M students. Also, the regulations only permit M students to transfer within the first 6 months of initial entry.*

19) How do I switch the role to a PDSO from a DSO?

Answer: *On the I-17 Form in SEVIS, there is an "edit school" link. Proceed to the end of the I-17 where there is a "campus" page with an "officials" link. The PDSO would need to access this link in order to change their role from a PDSO to a DSO and a DSO to a PDSO. If for some reason the original PDSO needs to be reassigned as a PDSO, the current PDSO would need to go to the I-17 and follow the same steps.*

20) Why am I not seeing certain correction links on student records and/or particular alerts that have been implemented with Release 5.1?

Answer: You would see the correction link/s on the student record if only the student is eligible for a correction. For example, if the program end date was yesterday, the link will appear on that record today and for the next 14 days or until you have made the correction request. This example applies to PDSOs only. Please note that DSOs have limited capability from a PDSO, which have been highlighted in the slides for you. Therefore, PDSOs will be able to see a particular correction link on a student record when the DSO cannot. For the alerts, a record would need to fall within that criterion for the alert/s to appear. If you do not see a particular alert, you may not have any students at that time that fall within that criterion for the alert.

21) Can you give examples when I would perform the following corrections of student status?

Answer:

Active to Initial – Student is pending change of status to F-1 and PDSO prematurely registered record

Canceled to Initial – PDSO failed to defer program start date and record auto-canceled 60 days after the program start date

Canceled to Terminated – PDSO/DSO had manually canceled the student's record when the intention was to terminate the student's record

Completed to Terminated – If the student had left the school near the end of their program without graduating and the record was auto-completed when the record should actually be in terminated status

22) Concerning the request for extension of the program completion date, what is the difference between the second field, "Medical or Academic circumstances that necessitate extension," and the third field, "Reason for correction"? Is it that the second field should be completed if the projected completion date has in actuality changed whereas the third field should be used if instead the initially projection completion date was erroneously entered? If so, would it be the case that if the second field is completed, the third field would not need to be, and vice-versa?

Answer: Both fields are required fields and we would like to clarify the information you need to answer through the following examples:

Field #2 example (medical circumstance): The student was injured in a car accident and needs a semester off for recovery.

Field #2 example (academic circumstance): The student failed a course and needs to retake the course next semester and thus will not graduate on time.

Field #3 example: The PDSO failed to extend the program end date when the student had made a timely request prior to the program end date.

23) When will SEVIS Release 5.1 be available in the Beta environment?

Answer: It is currently available for batch processing approved schools.

24) For M-1 schools, will there be a 'Continued Education' option for an extension reason?

Answer: Yes, this is considered an academic circumstance. You would just need to simply state this within field #3 (reason for correction) on the Extend Program screen.

25) What will PDSO/DSOs now see on student records in regard to Change of Status requests with Release 5.1?

When viewing a change of status request on a student record:

For students changing to F-1 or M-1 visa type, the PDSO/DSO will be able to view the change of status request on the student information screen when the request is either Pending, Approved, Denied, or Withdrawn.

For students changing from F-1 or M-1 visa type, the PDSO/DSO will only be able to view the change of status request on the student information screen when the request has been Approved.